

# ACTOR—SOLDIER —POET—

By

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The Mirrored Heart, etc.*



*Robert Henderson-Bland*

Part II of "Actor - Soldier - Poet"

PDF version prepared by Robert David Hyde (pseudonym - David de la Hyde) - July 2019.

R. Henderson-Bland was married to my father's (Lieut. Graham Clarendon-Hyde) half sister - Maud Hyde.



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## PHASE II

### *The Actor*

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players :  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.

SHAKESPEARE'S *As You Like It*.

## CHAPTER I

### *My Early Days With Tree*

Bearding the Lion in his Den—I become one of a Distinguished Company—"Doubling" Tree in *A Man's Shadow*—The Dramatist who told me about his New Play—And the Actor who did not get a "Rise."

TO make clear, thus far, the story of my life, it will now be necessary to turn back the hands of Time, in order to explain certain things in detail. I must perforce do this to justify myself in the eyes of the reader, particularly insofar as my work was concerned in connection with the making of the great Biblical film, *From the Manger to the Cross*, which has already been fully described in the preceding pages.

It will be obvious to all that no man would have been selected to portray a rôle of such magnitude as that of the Christus, unless he were thought to be in every way suitable for it. Experience of a very special and peculiar type was obviously the first essential; experience not so much of the screen—for at the time I had no knowledge of that kind of work at all—but rather of stage-craft, and the ability to characterise. That was the most important thing. In that particular type of work I had already had a fairly wide and varied experience, as will be gathered from the story I am about to tell in the pages that follow.

Here then, I propose to touch at some length upon the training I had received, and the many parts I had previously played with past masters of the actor's craft, and it was because of this work that I venture to think I was greatly helped to fit myself for the portrayal of so momentous, so altogether unusual a rôle as that of the Christus.

So then, let us cast our minds back for a spell to my early days, when, as an inexperienced youth, I decided to make the stage my career. Without consulting anyone I

left my native heath and went to London with the fixed determination to see Mr. Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who had not then been knighted. I shall always be grateful to that great gentleman for the charming manner in which he received me. Among the things he remarked I remember him saying that the Stage was very overcrowded : and very humbly I suggested that there might be a place for me somewhere. He smiled and said he would see what he could do, and promised to write to me.

Two days passed, and I heard nothing. On the third day I determined to do something. I decided to write to Mr. Tree to remind him of his promise. Thinking that all his correspondence addressed to His Majesty's Theatre was dealt with by a secretary, I conceived the idea of finding his private address, and I sent a letter to No. 77, Sloane Street. I can remember the opening sentence of my letter now, and cannot but smile at the thought of my boyish impudence. It started like this :

Dear Sir, Importunity is recommended in the Scriptures as a virtue, and remembering that, I am venturing to remind you of your promise . . .

By return of post I received a letter from Mr. Tree's secretary, Mr. D. J. Williams, nephew of Sir Hubert Herkomer, who is today a very valued friend of mine. The letter told me that Mr. Tree would be pleased to see me during the performance of *Trilby*. I went round to the theatre and waited till the end of an act when Mr. Tree came off the stage in the character of Svengali, asked for me, took me by the arm, and led me up to his dressing-room.

I have seen several actors play Svengali on the stage, and on the screen, but never did I see anyone who came near Tree, with his masterly make-up and his subtlety in suggesting the self-sufficient spirit of genius. Tree was one of the greatest character-actors of his time.

I was engaged, after seeing Mr. Dana, who was the general manager, and then was opened up to me a field of most interesting experiences.

His Majesty's Theatre (it was called "Her Majesty's Theatre" before the death of Queen Victoria) and the Lyceum were two points whereat all the arts seemed to meet. In these two theatres were to be found the playwrights, the poets, the artists, the composers, the novelists, and all exponents of the lesser but necessary arts.

To be a member of His Majesty's Theatre Company, or of the Lyceum Theatre Company, was a real distinction in the days when Tree and Irving directed their destinies. No other two men of the theatre in the 'nineties ever attracted men of such brilliance as these two actors.

A statesman like Gladstone was seen one night eagerly watching a scene from the prompt corner of the Lyceum Theatre stage. There were other successful managers, for instance, Sir George Alexander and Sir Charles Wyndham, but despite their success there was never the glamour that suffused all the happenings at His Majesty's and the Lyceum.

The truth is, Irving and Tree, apart from their vocations, were most interesting men. They were not merely fine actors; today it is the fashion to deride their acting ability; they were very remarkable men.

I have been present at some of the supper-parties Tree used to give in "The Dome" at His Majesty's Theatre, and have seen him surrounded by some of the most interesting figures of the time. Without any self-consciousness he presided over those gatherings in such a happy manner that similar affairs since have seemed to me tame and pretentious. To each guest on these occasions a printed list was sent giving position at tables. Here, for instance, is a list of those present at one of these midnight parties on Thursday, July 7th, 1904, and I am inclined to feel that its representative character justifies inclusion in these pages :

Mr. Tree	Mr. W. W. Corner
Sir Felix Semon	Mr. Oscar Asche
Miss Lily Hanbury	Miss Helen Ferrers
Mr. Stephen Phillips	Mr. Lionel Brough
Miss Constance Collier	Mr. Percy Anderson
Rev. Hugh Chapman	Mr. Fisher White

Miss Margaret Halstan	Mr. E. M. Robson
Sir Edward Clarke	Mr. Frank Stanmore
Mrs. Esmond	Mr. Raymond Roze
Mr. Basil Gill	Mr. Brandon Thomas
Miss Julia Neilson	Mr. Charles Fulton
Mr. W. L. Courtney	Miss Ruth Mackay
Lady Lewis	Mr. Frank Mills
Mrs. Bendall	Mr. C. W. Somerset
Mr. Louis N. Parker	Mr. Graham Hill
Mrs. George Lewis	Mr. Henry Dana
Mr. Julian L'Estrange	Mr. S. J. Pryor
Lady Fripp	Mr. Malcolm Watson
Mr. J. D. Langton	Mr. H. B. Warner
Miss Kate Rorke	Mr. William Mollison
Mr. Michael Morton	Mr. Edmund Maurice
Miss Olga Nethersole	Mr. Courtice Pounds
Mr. T. P. O'Connor	Miss Mimi St. Cyr
Lady Clarke	Mr. Sidney Dark
Mr. Charles Warner	Miss Sydney Fairbrother
Mr. C. F. Gill	Mr. Golding Bright
Mrs. Alfred Watson	Miss Sarah Brooke
Mr. Ernest Bendall	Mr. Norman Forbes
Mr. J. D. Beveridge	Mr. Kinsey Peile
Mr. Mancini	Mrs. Spender
Mr. S. A. Cookson	M. Coquelin
Mr. George Bancroft	Mrs. Tree
Mr. Addison Bright	Sir Gilbert Parker
Mr. Charles Buchel	Mr. Cyril Maude
Mr. Ambrose Lee	Mr. A. B. Walkley
Mr. Arnold White	Rev. Russell Wakefield
Mr. Blathwayte	Mr. H. V. Esmond
The Rev. Forbes Phillips	Mr. A. J. Spender
Mrs. Cecil Raleigh	Miss Katie Lewis
Mr. Gerald Lawrence	Mr. Romaine Walker
Mr. Edward Ledger	Mrs. W. L. Courtney
Miss Mary Brough	Mr. Sydney Grundy
Mr. Robb Harwood	Miss Rosina Fillipi
Mr. Allen Thomas	Mr. Max Beerbohm
Mr. Harvey Long	Miss Lily Brayton
Mrs. George Bancroft	Mr. Joseph Knight
Miss Fairfax	Mrs. Charles Buchel
Mr. Mortimer Menpes	Mr. Adolph Schmid

Sir Alfred Fripp	Mr. Norman Tharp
Miss Tree	Mr. Percy Nash
Mr. Claude Lowther	Mr. Angus MacLeod
Mr. Alfred Watson	Mr. O. B. Clarence
Mr. Henderson-Bland	Mr. Compton Coutts
Mr. William Archer	Mr. Eric Leslie
Mr. George Lewis	Mr. Cecil Rose
Mr. William Haviland	Mr. Richard Temple
Mr. Cecil King	Mr. Alfred Wigley
Mr. Charles Quartermaine	Mr. Holthoir
Mr. Louis Mercanton	Mr. C. F. Collings

Irving had much the same gift as Tree. It was never my privilege to attend any of his famous suppers, but I had so many friends among members of his company upon whom I could rely, that I am tempted to say that no man of his time presided over a gathering of important men at a banquet with greater grace and distinction.

In Her Majesty's Theatre Company in those days were Evelyn Millard, who played Portia in *Julius Cæsar*, and was the original Francesca to Henry Ainley's Paolo in Stephen Phillips' *Paolo and Francesca*, produced by Sir George Alexander; Lily Hanbury, who played Calpurnia in *Julius Cæsar*; Constance Collier, who played the lead in *The Eternal City*; Nancy Price; Mabel Love; Mrs. Brown Potter; Gerald du Maurier, starting his career; Fisher White; Norman McKinnel; Jerrold Robertshaw; Arthur Scott Craven; Herbert Ross; Louis Calvert; Alexander Calvert; Rann Kennedy; James B. Fagan; Lawrence Grossmith; Robert Taber; S. A. Cookson; H. Varna; Lionel Brough; Brandon Thomas; Charles Fulton and others whose names escape me.

Tree was a veritable demon for work. No running away to the Carlton for luncheon. No, a glass of milk and a bun would be brought, and that sufficed him till he had a light dinner before the performance.

As a master of "make-up" I don't think I ever met the equal of Tree. Of course, I have seen many men who could put on a remarkable "make-up," but Tree was always startling us with his immense cleverness in this direction.

In a revival of *A Man's Shadow*, I was chosen to double Tree in the play, and he made me up himself on the first night. I was astonished at the rapidity with which he did it. I remember the late Lady Tree coming into the room in the midst of the operation and exclaiming: "Oh, Herbert! how can you make this nice-looking boy so hideous?" Tree laughingly replied: "I'm hideous, and hideous he's got to be."

I had great fun doing that job of doubling Tree. A famous dramatist told me the secret plot of his new play before I could convince him that I was not Tree; and one of the cast shyly asked me in the dim light of the wings if I thought there was any hope of his getting a rise in salary. Not wishing to dash his hopes, or to deprive Mr. Tree of his legitimate pleasure, I told him to speak to me about it again at the end of the act. I later saw that actor tackle Tree, whose puzzled expression led me to believe that he thought he was losing his memory.



The late Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Mysteries of Make-up*

My First Attempt to use Grease-paint—And how Willie Clarkson saved Me from Myself—Robert Buchanan, Poet and Dramatist—“The Infernal Pity”—Some Stories about Tree—Hall Caine—And Arthur Bouchier.

**W**HEN I joined Mr. Tree's company, the mysteries of grease-paint were unknown to me, but I bought every colour in grease-paint ever manufactured.

I found out at rehearsal that all the men in the company had had some experience before joining, and I was so nervous about being “codded” that I tried to give the impression in the dressing-room that I had appeared in some remote age. An actor, named Varna, was dressing with me, and I knew that he had been on the stage for years. He was putting on a heavy make-up and using lining pencils, of which I knew nothing, though I seemed to have dozens of them.

I carried on a rapid conversation with him, and every time he used a stick of grease-paint I noted the number, hastily found it among my lot, and applied some vigorously to my face. In about five minutes I had the strangest conglomeration of colours on my face you ever saw.

Peering at myself in the glass, I came to the conclusion that I did not look like the engaging young man I was supposed to represent. I was wearing “powder,” and was supposed to be an “exquisite” of the French Eighteenth century.

I was just about to wipe the mess off my face when the bell went, and I asked Varna what it meant. He told me that it portended that the orchestra had started. This news perturbed me greatly, and I put on the wig, which had a forehead-band, of which I knew nothing. I looked more dreadful than ever, and was wondering how to improve

matters when the bell rang again. Varna said: "That's 'Beginners.' You are on at the rise of the curtain. You had better get down."

I tied a cravat hurriedly, put on my magnificent coat of brocade, a sword, and slipped my hat under my arm, and left the room. I was sailing downstairs—no other word describes my progress so well—when I was accosted by a gentleman in full evening dress, wearing a beard and a well-ironed silk hat.

"Are you going on the stage like that?" he enquired.

With all the hauteur I could command I told him that that was my intention.

Seizing me by the arm, my bearded inquisitor began forcibly to lead me back to the dressing-room, muttering:

"Mr. Tree is very particular—very particular."

I was made-up hurriedly, and managed to get on the stage just as the curtain was rising. The gentleman with the beard was no other than the famous Willie Clarkson, the well-known wig-maker.

I wore many wigs made by Clarkson after that night, but I never talked with him without a memory of our first encounter creeping into my mind.

Among many of the interesting personalities that I first met at the theatre was the poet, Robert Buchanan, author of *Balder the Beautiful*, and the play, *A Man's Shadow*.

When I heard that he was going to attend rehearsals, I was particularly interested because, to me, he was famous and infamous by reason of his attack on Rossetti and Swinburne, in his article entitled "The Fleshly School of Poetry," written under the *nom de plume* of Thomas Maitland.

I can vividly remember my surprise and disappointment at meeting him. I had an idea that he would have the leonine appearance of Henley; but no such thing. He certainly was bearded, but he looked flabby, and stumped about with the untidiest umbrella I had ever set eyes on, and was wearing thick black woollen gloves. The gloves fascinated me. We were foolish in those days, and could not easily divorce a poet's appearance from his work. I lost all interest in Robert Buchanan after meeting him.

Alma Tadema, the artist, was making a good deal of noise in those days, and his pictures were the chief source of interest at the Burlington House show. Two thousand guineas was the price paid for one of his canvases. People would stand in front of one of his pictures, invariably a classic subject, and make inept remarks, such as : "How cool the marble looks ! I should like to be sitting on it on a hot day like this ;" or : "No one can paint marble like Tadema. The very veins in it are true to life."

Tree prevailed upon Tadema to design the scenery for *Julius Cæsar*. At rehearsal one day I handed him a cup of tea, and politely enquired if he liked sugar and milk. This started a conversation, and we had several chats. Years later, when visiting the galleries in Holland and Belgium I was interested to see how much prominence was given to his work in the museum at Amsterdam. But I never cared much about it, and I cared less for the interior of his house in St. John's Wood with its copper staircase.

This was the day when artists ensconced themselves in marvellous studios : Herkomer, Leighton, Millais and Goodall had palatial ones. An artist, a friend of mine, ruined himself with the burden of keeping up one of these magnificent places.

I am reminded of a story told me by my friend, the late Lewis Hind. He went to interview Sir John Millais at his superb place at Princes Gate, and found him in his studio eating a chop with a bottle of Bass by his side. He told Hind that it was his favourite luncheon, and asked him not to mention it, because the public credited him with more aristocratic and expensive tastes.

A few stories of Tree that are known to actors, but have not been set down, may prove of interest.

During a rehearsal of *The Eternal City*—a play always referred to by actors in the cast as "The Infernal Pity"—a title which clung to it after the reading of the play by the late Sir Hall Caine, when an actor, very bored by a long speech by the author, said in a sepulchral but audible whisper : "There's nothing eternal about it : it should be

called 'The Infernal Pity' . . ." When we were all waiting to be dismissed, Tree beckoned Hall Caine, who went to him. Tree took him by the arm and led him up stage very mysteriously, and then, with a sweeping gesture, indicated the cane furniture in the loggia scene and said: "Hall Caine! Hall Caine!" Hall Caine was immensely disgusted, called his secretary, and left the theatre.

At a rehearsal of the same play we were waiting for Hall Caine, who was motoring up from Bognor, and Tree decided to start without him. I was playing the English Ambassador and gave Tree a cue. He stood with his part in his hand, and began turning over the pages impatiently, and kept muttering: "A lot of this is nonsense. A lot of it ought to be cut . . . a lot of it ought to be cut." Presently the door on to the stage was flung open and Hall Caine appeared, dressed like Hoggenheimer, with a wild fur coat up to his ears. Tree immediately went to him, the part in his hand, and said, while turning some of the leaves: "A lot of this seems to me quite unnecessary. Do you mind if I cut some of it?" There was a stony silence, and Tree suddenly put out his hand and said: "How do you do? So sorry to greet you with a cut."

On another occasion at rehearsal they were doing some building operation in the arcade adjoining the theatre when a crane broke, and something was hurled to the ground and the impact made a tremendous noise. Several actors simultaneously asked: "Whatever's that?" Tree, whose mind was full of a theatrical dispute carried on with some heat by himself and Arthur Bouchier in the Press, immediately replied: "Nothing; only Bouchier's head burst." Reassured, we went on with the rehearsal.

Every year Tree used to do a thirteen-weeks' tour of what was known as Number One towns. When Tree toured he did it in regal fashion. Special trucks for scenery, carpenters, electricians, and all means to boot. We were playing *Trilby* at Birmingham, and Tree, who used a good many different limes, carried the men who used to sit on the lime perches, Prompt and O.P. corners, and manage the weird lighting effects used when Svengali was stricken

with paralysis, or whatever it was. The local men had heard so much about Tree in this scene that they bribed his men to let them carry on. Tree came to the scene, and was lying on the stage clutching at his throat *in extremis*, gurgling: "O God of Israel! give me one more day to live. Give me one more day," when he realised that the green limes were not functioning, and looking up to the men on the lime perches he fiercely hissed: "Turn on the limes!—turn on the limes!" The local men were so fascinated watching Tree's paroxysms on the stage that they could do nothing. Tree repeated his lines: "O God of Israel," etcetera, and still nothing happened; then he hoarsely hissed: "Turn on the limes, damn you! turn on the limes!" And again nothing happened; then Tree angrily blurted out: "I'll kick you when I come off."

There was a bit of a rumpus with the stage manager later.

## CHAPTER 3

### *On Tour With Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer*

Engaged to play a Round of Parts at Thirty Shillings a Week—  
Turning Splutterers into Stars—Two Years' Hard Work and Fine  
Experience—Something about Theatrical "Digs"—The Landlady  
and the Haggis—And What Happened when the Bishop Banned the  
Whisky.

**A**FTER being with Tree for two years, I wished to get more experience of playing an important round of parts. Norman McKinnel said he would introduce me to Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer, in whose company he told me he had learned so much. I consulted Mr. Tree and he thought it an excellent idea, and promised, if I played with Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer for a season, he would re-engage me. After playing a round of parts, which included Bassanio, Laertes, Macduff, Joseph Surface, Sir Francis Levison, etc., for two years, Mr. Tree kept his word and I rejoined his company.

I shall never forget my first interview with Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer. She was sitting on a sofa when I went into the room, and with her strong, almost masculine face, and hair parted in the middle, she looked quite prim, and with a very precise voice she said :

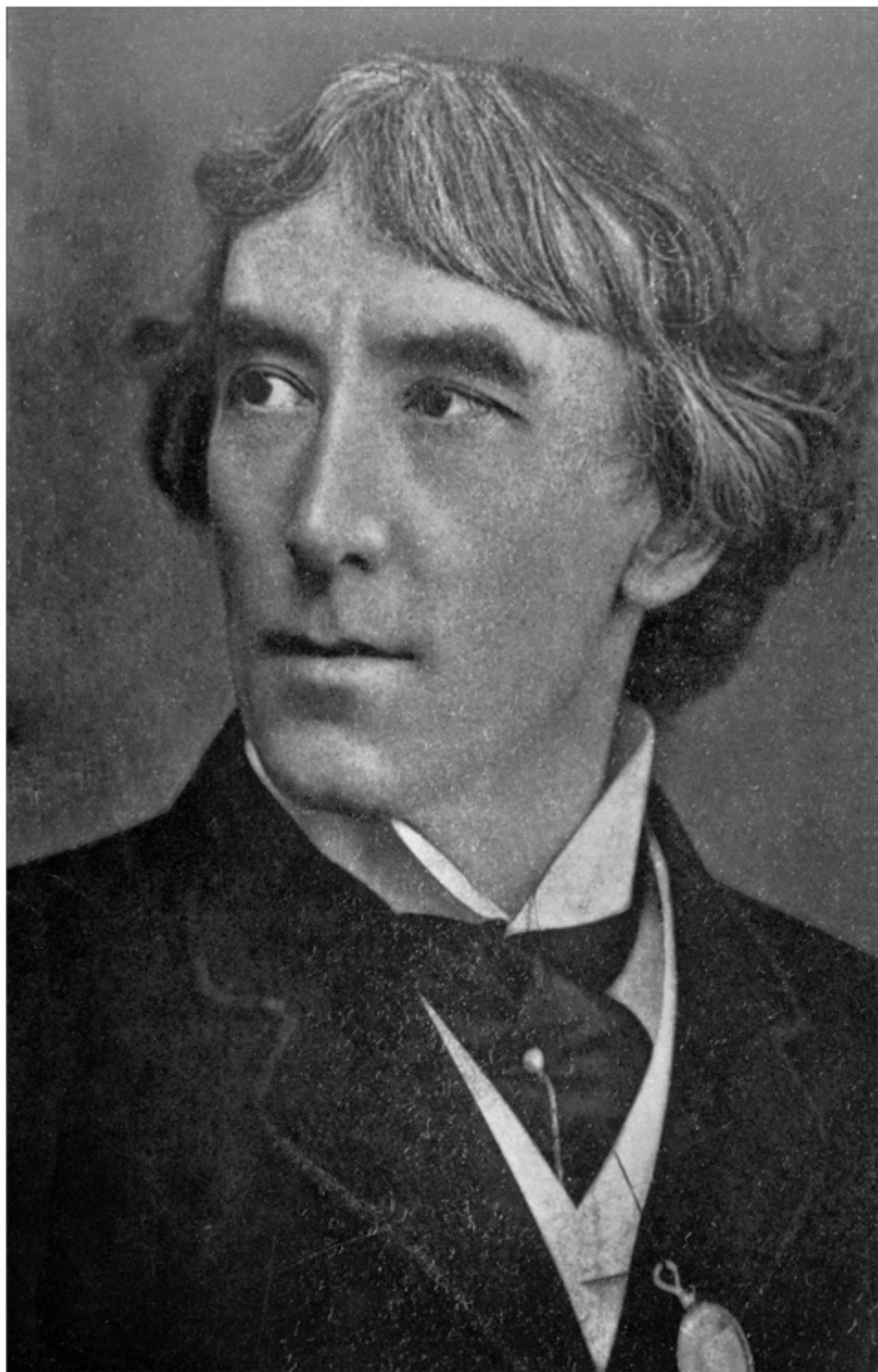
"Will you recite me something, Mr. Bland?"

I was prepared for this, because Norman McKinnel told me she would ask me to recite something.

I was a great friend of Franklin McCleay and I admired his performance of Cassius in *Julius Cæsar* so much that I went down to watch and listen to him night after night, and had a pretty good idea of the inflexions he used in certain speeches, so I started to give Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer the speech beginning :

"Once upon a raw and gusty day" . . .

When I had finished she said: "Mr. Bland, you have dramatic talent. I will engage you to play a round



The late Sir Henry Irving

of parts, and your salary will be thirty shillings a week.”

I really felt a bit of a fraud, because I was only parroting Frank McCleay.

Although it is so many years ago, I can still remember every word of that famous speech. I never played Cassius, but I did play Brutus to the Cassius of Godfrey Tearle at the Court Theatre.

Among the people who have been members of the Bandmann-Palmer company were Mrs. Patrick Campbell; the late Frank Worthing, who made a considerable reputation in America (he had played the round of parts allotted to me); Norman McKinnel; O. B. Clarence; Charles Bryant, once leading man with Alla Nazimova; Baliol Holloway; and many others whose names I cannot recall.

Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer was one of the best teachers I have ever met. It was wonderful what she could do with unpromising material. She once told me this story :

A young man came to see her with a letter of introduction from Frank Benson. The letter told her that he was hopeless as an actor by reason of some defect in his speech, but if anyone could do anything with him she was the person to do it. Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer asked the bearer of the letter to recite something, and after listening to him spluttering inarticulately for a few moments, she told him that she would admit him to her company. The next day she gave him two pieces of cork which she told him to place between his back teeth. He did this and then she made him recite. The procedure forced him to use his lips, and in a month he was making himself understood. That young man was the late Lyall Swete, who later in his career played important parts in London, but he never quite got over a certain plummy utterance.

With another actor who became famous Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer tried another experiment when she found other things fail. While acting he would, in his exuberance, fling his arms about, making useless gestures that meant nothing. She had told him repeatedly never to make a gesture unless it was necessary, but all to no avail ; so she resorted to the expedient of tying his hands behind him at rehearsal. This

actor was noted for his reserve power and paucity of gestures when acting. He once told me after I had congratulated him on a magnificent performance in a play that made a very great success, that all he knew about acting he had learned from Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer. The actor who suffered such a gruelling was the late Norman McKinnel.

Once at rehearsal of *Hamlet* I made my entrance as Laertes with a sword in my hand, with the cry "off": "Stand you all without," and going up to Claudius threateningly asked: "Where is my father?"

I evidently did this pretty badly, or Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer wanted to knock the stuffing out of me, because she cried out: "Oh, not like that, Mr. Bland!"

In a moment I was chilled to the marrow, and, angered to the head; I was also dreadfully tired. For several nights I had been sitting up for hours committing lines to memory, and black coffee had kept me awake.

I lowered my sword and said with all the politeness I could command: "Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer, if I could play this part as you wish me to play it I should not be here. I should be earning twenty pounds a week in London." I regretted saying this immediately I had done so—I was a fiery, impetuous, ill-mannered dog in those days—and was calmed by her saying very quietly: "Make your entrance again, Mr. Bland," and like a chastened, shorn lamb I did so.

The fact that she never showed me any ill-will, but only never-failing kindness and help during the two years I was with her, proved the bigness of the woman.

She only praised me once during those two years, but when she did so I knew that she meant it, whether the praise was deserved or not deserved.

One night I was asked to go to her dressing-room before the performance. Very formally she told me that she had been in London during the afternoon and had attended a performance of *The School For Scandal* at the Haymarket Theatre, where Miss Winifred Emery and Cyril Maude had made a great success. After telling me

how Mr. Maude had placed a box at her disposal, she suddenly said: "I have sent for you, Mr. Bland, to tell you that I think your performance of Joseph Surface is immeasurably better than that given by Mr. Sidney Valentine. He is too solemn for words."

I thanked her and departed. I saw Valentine's performance later, and was inclined to agree with her. A bright young thing like Lady Teazle would have been frightened to death by such a man as he presented. In suitable parts Valentine displayed gifts that put him among the finest actors of the English stage.

Speaking of fine actors reminds me that I was in the rooms of Kay Souper of the Benson Company, in Manchester, with George Fitzgerald, also of the Benson Company. Matheson Lang came in to say good-bye before catching a train to London, where he was to fulfil his first West End engagement. We admired him as an actor and a man, and we wished him every success.

He made an immediate success in London, and the next time the Provinces saw him he appeared as an actor-manager. Today he is one of the most important actor-managers on the English stage, whereas his old manager, Sir Frank Benson, who so valiantly brandished the oriflamme of Shakespeare through Great Britain, seldom acts now. I salute Sir Frank Benson.

He once sent for me when he was playing at the Dalston Theatre. I was given a seat and told that Mr. Benson would see me after the third act. He was playing Orlando in *As You Like It*, and in the forest scene he was eating an apple and sitting on some straw. He was wearing a very short jerkin, and when he arose to do some business "centre," the audience discovered that some straw adhered to his tights and as he wandered about looking for all the world like a forlorn and moulting bird of Paradise, the audience giggled so ominously that I tried to frame something in my mind that I might say to warn him; but the act came to an end before I could convince myself that I could make him grasp my meaning if I called out.

I had my interview later but did not refer to the apanage

that he wore in ignorance with a certain becoming gravity. I could not see my way to accept the offer Mr. Benson made to me, and have always regretted I was never a member of his famous company.

Touring, as we called our peregrinations in those days, was a very different matter to what it is now. For fifteen shillings a week you could get comfortable, clean rooms. Another ten shillings would pay for all the food you needed during the week.

Those who knew the ropes generally used rooms that had been recommended. An actor would get a list of rooms from some brother actor, and write to the several landladies some time ahead to engage them. Most of these landladies could cook in a plain way admirably, and did look after the occupants of their rooms. They generally kept a sort of visitors' book in which you were supposed to write your impressions and encomiums if they were ready to drip from your pen.

If you had found the rooms entirely unsatisfactory it was some consolation to observe that the actor who had used the rooms previously had written in a determined hand the words :

“ Quoth the raven.”

If anyone wishes to prove that Poe's poem was often in the minds of actors, let him look through the visitors' books of the theatrical landladies of Great Britain.

One landlady once asked me what it meant, and inasmuch as she had proved herself an incredible disappointment and a swindler, the waters of compassion were dried up within me, and I enlightened her. After some time she grasped my meaning and exclaimed: “ Just fancy that! Such a nicely spoken man. I'll never have him here again.” I have good reason to believe she never did.

The actor in particular who used to give rein to his fancy in these books was the late Charles Rock, an admirable actor and a charming man.

Writing of landladies reminds me of one in Scotland. I had booked my rooms some time ahead, and when I

arrived she beamingly showed me the sitting-room. When I asked to see the bedroom, in a kittenish sort of way she said with a rising inflection: "You haven't far to go," and pointing to a recess in the wall, said: "There it is. You'll find the bed very comfortable. Mr. Harry Monkhouse (a famous comedian) liked it very much. He died there last week."

How I loathed that place. It was like one of those tombs in the East made in a rock. The shade of Harry Monkhouse hovered over me every night, and in spite of a certain benignity in its appearance, I was kept from sleep. When the week was up I was a wreck, and "Quoth the raven" went into that landlady's book.

Another landlady in Scotland was amusing. Charles Bryant (brother of Mrs. J. B. Fagan) and myself were sharing rooms in Glasgow. The landlady was a very superior person, and with no uncertain voice pointed out that everyone of importance in the theatrical world had stayed with her, and that she kept up a correspondence with some of the "leading women" of London. We were duly impressed and had hardly the nerve to order anything to eat in case this angelic woman should be put out in any way. It was my job to order meals, and as Bryant had never tasted haggis I thought it a good idea to have it on the Saturday night. An easy thing for the landlady to cook, and something to stir her patriotism, with which she was heavily engaged. We got back from the theatre and waited for the haggis after ringing the bell.

Presently the door was flung open and our landlady appeared carrying aloft, on an upturned palm, a tray whereon a steaming haggis rolled ominously.

Our respectable landlady presented a spectacle that might have affrighted two lesser wights. Her hair was hanging down in confusion over her shoulders, and her eyes were glazed like the eyes of a boa-constrictor contemplating a lengthy retirement after swallowing a red buck.

Swaying, she processed round the table in a sacrificial manner until the haggis rolled off the tray. Exercising my

vulpine intellect, I quickly realised that if she got upon her knees to retrieve that haggis I should have some time in getting her out of the room, so I took her by the arm and led her to the door, and suggested that she went to bed.

After she had gone and the haggis had been retrieved, my troubles started over again. The circumambient skin had protected the haggis in its recent manœuvres, and I gave Charles a portion, whereon he asked me what it was made of. This is a question that is invariably asked by people who see it for the first time, and I was not entirely unprepared for such a question, because I had once glanced in a cookery book with a hope to solve the mystery.

“There’s some oatmeal, sheep’s heart, liver, onions, and part of the King’s Hood,” I said gaily.

“King’s Hood!” snapped Charles. “What the devil is the King’s Hood?”

“It’s part of the interior,” I replied.

“Interior! Interior of what?”

“Well, there you have me,” I said. “Biology is not my strong point. Peg into it and see how you like it. It was the favourite dish of the poet Burns, who called it: ‘Great chieftain o’ the puddin’ race.’”

“I’ll not touch the damned stuff,” said Charles, and he didn’t.

Later he went out to the kitchen to see if he could find a tin of sardines, and found the landlady sipping neat whisky from a pannikin, while certain cronies anxiously watched her prowess. Charles returned without the sardines.

Before the War I was in Detroit, and was invited to a dinner given by the St. Andrew’s Society. There must have been over five hundred guests in the large hall where the dinner took place.

The haggis was piped in by magnificent Highlanders in full-dress uniforms. When a stalwart and handsome Highlander brought me some haggis and I saw no sign of whisky to drink with it, I asked him what he usually drank with the dish.



Henderson-Bland in "The Eternal City"

“ Without whisky it’s a shameful dish and will do no mon any good,” he said ; and looking towards the head table he indicated a certain bishop who was acting as chairman. “ There’s the mon who has ruined our appetites. He wouldn’t take the chair unless whisky was set aside. Empty the goodly mess into your napkin and follow me. There’s some of God’s liquor in another room.”

I quietly emptied my haggis into my napkin and followed my handsome guide to a room filled with joyous men eating their haggis in a proper manner. I regret to say that most of us missed the bishop’s opening speech, but we did manage to enjoy ourselves.

## CHAPTER 4

### *With Mrs. Langtry in South Africa*

First English theatrical star to Tour South Africa—At Cross-Purposes with Charles Sugden—How Mrs. Royce developed an Inferiority Complex—Irving—The Hactor—And the Critic—Willie Clarkson's Story.

**I**N the Provinces in those days the theatre was the only form of entertainment, and consequently good business was done by theatrical companies.

Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer retired with a comfortable fortune of fifty thousand pounds, after giving her son Maurice money to finance his theatrical ventures in the East. Maurice Bandmann left ninety thousand pounds.

A touring repertory company would not make much money today, but the interest in the theatre twenty-five years ago was so keen in some parts of Great Britain that one might hear certain plays discussed at street corners, and often an actor was prompted from the gallery if he dried up in a well-known play.

When the forty-five weeks' tour was drawing to a close Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer asked me if I was returning to her for another year. I said I would do so if she increased my salary by ten shillings a week. This she refused to do, and I said goodbye to her on the last night of the tour, thanking her for her kindness and help. The day after I returned home to Brighton, a telegram arrived containing these words: "Agree to your terms. Contract follows. Bandmann-Palmer."

It must have been about this time that I went to South Africa with Mrs. Langtry (Lady de Bathe).

Although she had not lost her beauty at that time, it was not so wondrous as it had been. There was only one woman in South Africa who in any way approached her, and she was in Johannesburg when we arrived in the town.

She was an Englishwoman, very beautiful, witty, and many years younger than Mrs. Langtry, who was frankly jealous of her.

Charles Sugden, who was with us, knew this woman, and put a box at her disposal one night when we were playing *The Walls of Jericho*. After one of his scenes he went into the box in his make-up and sat, as he thought, out of sight, but the proud, steady gaze of Mrs. Langtry alighted upon him, and filled his mind with apprehension. There is a clause in most theatrical contracts forbidding actors to appear in the front of the "house" in "make-up."

Mrs. Langtry sent a message to Sugden requesting him to leave the box. Sugden refused to do so, and without a moment's hesitation, Mrs. Langtry sent for her stage manager and told him to find a substitute for Mr. Sugden for the next night's performance. Up to that time no understudy rehearsals had taken place, and so Monckton Hoffe (author of that delightful play *The Little Damsel*) was called upon to "mug" the part, and he sat up all night with towels round his head trying to get the lines. He played the part the next night and gave a very creditable performance.

Mrs. Langtry was angry, and she had a will of iron. Poor Sugden was in despair, and he never appeared again under her management. He returned to London and brought a suit against Mrs. Langtry, which was settled later out of court.

Everyone has seen pictures of Mrs. Langtry, so why attempt to describe her? Anyhow, I will make an attempt. Her neck and shoulders were superb, her legs thin and shapeless. She tried to hide this defect when playing Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Her light brown hair grew gracefully, and was worn in the nape of the neck. Her skin was lovely, and she owed this, I think, to her magnificent health. She had very beautiful grey-blue eyes, a fine sensitive nose, good teeth, a largish mouth, and well defined lips.

Julian Royce, an old friend of mine, told me that when he and his wife, a very handsome woman, were playing

with Mrs. Langtry in America, an amusing incident happened. Mrs. Royce always wore, and does to this day wear, her hair in the nape of the neck, and when she made an entrance in the play, before Mrs. Langtry appeared, she received an ovation. The audience had mistaken her for Mrs. Langtry, and all she could do was to dumbly smile. Later, when Mrs. Langtry appeared, looking a little angry because she had heard the applause so lavishly bestowed on Mrs. Royce, she did not get a "hand." At the end of the act Mrs. Royce was requested to go to Mrs. Langtry's dressing-room, when she was told in no uncertain manner that her coiffure was unsuited to the part she was playing. Mrs. Royce was requested to wear it in some other manner. After a great deal of cogitation and manœuvring she arranged her hair like a cottage loaf, and succeeded in striking terror into the hearts of future audiences.

After wearing her hair in this strange manner for some months, poor Mrs. Royce developed such an inferiority complex that when asked by friends how she was she caught herself saying: "Nicely, thank you"; and it was only through letting down her hair at repeated intervals that she was cured of this distressing habit!

I liked Mrs. Langtry immensely, and though I started out rather badly with her through being amusingly firm about something, we became good friends.

She had met everybody, and her conversation was a mine of information about all the celebrities of her time. I think she was generous in her estimates of people. The late Mrs. T. P. O'Connor told me a story about Mrs. Langtry that I cannot repeat here, that revealed the very core of her nature. Mrs. Langtry was a great woman, but by no means a great actress. She was much too sensible a woman to think she was in the first rank.

As Rosalind in *As You Like It*, she gave a very good performance. I played Oliver and as she was supposed to faint in my arms in one scene I was always fearful about dropping her. She would never have forgiven me had I done so. Fortunately, with the aid of a good deal of staff work, I managed to evade the dreaded issue.



Evelyn Millard and Henry Ainley in "Poala and Francesca"  
(Photo: Ellis & Walery)

She was seen at her best, I thought, in the play Sydney Grundy wrote for her, *The Degenerates*. The people of Johannesburg liked her so well in this play that we were not called upon to put up anything else, although there were five or six plays in the repertory.

I played the part of Lord Stornoway, a part created by Charles Hawtrey or George Grossmith, I forget which. It was a most amusing part, and Grundy had evidently liked it. He had built up certain situations in a way the French build them to bring about what they term "*mot d'occasion*." Stornoway was a drunken peer, always asking for "Johnnie Walker" (a brand of whisky—this is for the information of those who know nothing of such matters), and I, thinking of a delightful, handsome friend of mine who had earned himself an early grave through addiction to whisky, put a little vaseline under my moustache, which made it look as if it had been repeatedly dipped in some liquid refreshment for years. Mrs. Langtry was horrified at my realism and asked me to stop it.

When I tried to explain my reasons for doing it, she said: "I know, I know, but it's horrible and disgusting."

Mrs. Langtry was always well turned out. Nothing untidy about her. When we did a two-days' journey in South Africa some of the women of the company were untidy, and wore *peignoirs* in the morning. Not so Mrs. Langtry. At eight o'clock she was as any woman to be seen in Bond Street on a May morning.

One day she proposed that I should write a play for her on the subject of Catherine of Russia. I was tremendously interested in this proposal, but of course could do nothing about it till I returned to London. I talked it over with her many times.

When I did return to London I discussed the matter with my old friend, A. E. Manning Foster, who became very excited about the whole thing; so much so that I invited him to collaborate with me.

We started to read up the subject, and we both became so tremendously interested in the early career of Catherine that we decided to finish the play with her proclamation as

Empress. We could not get a copy of her *Memoirs*, so we advertised and at last secured a copy from someone in Yorkshire. The *Memoirs* of Catherine are a revelation and explain much about her remarkable character.

We wrote the play, and I dared not show it to Mrs. Langtry because Catherine in the play was presented as a young woman. The Drama Society gave it a production, and Frances Dillon played Catherine. Leon M. Lion and Langhorne Burton were in the cast and I played Poniatowski.

Mrs. Langtry was the first English theatrical "star" to take a company to South Africa, and on her arrival at Durban on the *Walmer Castle* made some stir. The mayor went aboard to greet her, and a brass band played inappropriate music when she went down the gangway with a large bouquet of flowers in her arms.

Unlike most actresses, she hated that sort of thing. It was no note of superiority, but underlying her detestation of the methods of advertising was something fine, bearing on an inherent sincerity in her nature. She disliked charity affairs, which were to her pegs whereon to hang an advertisement, and made herself unpopular by not putting in an appearance at some of them.

Like all of us, she was very interested in the rickshaw boys, many of them of superb physique, wearing large horns on their heads. She hired one of these boys and dressed him in her racing colours. This boy, a magnificent creature from the Matabele tribe, six feet four inches in height, was so proud of his new costume that he used to prance and spring in the air like a mustang, and a second Matabele "rising" was only avoided by Mrs. Langtry leaving for England.

Lily Hanbury, who was leading lady to Sir Herbert Tree, was living in South Africa with her husband, Mr. Guedella, and she came to see *The Degenerates*, in which play she had created one of the parts. She wept openly during the performance. It was not any pathos in the play that touched her, but it was the surging memories of her late career that swept over her. Of all the women of the theatre that it has

been my privilege to meet, I venture to think that the late Lily Hanbury was the most loved by her colleagues.

I may be forgiven for telling a story that is well known on the stage. There was little love lost between Irving and Tree in those days, and this story is about those two rivals :

Irving wanted a sorry-looking horse to pull on the tumbril in a play entitled *Robespierre*, by Sardou, which he was producing at the Lyceum. A man named Hale, who supplied the theatres and opera with all livestock from ducks to cows, brought a horse to the theatre, and he was waiting with the animal, a veritable Rosinante, with ribs sticking out, in the "wings."

Hale, a Cockney, always liked to talk with the "big-wigs," and seeing Irving standing alone on the stage thinking out some abstruse problem of production, went up to him, and, jerking his thumb in the direction of the horse, said : "This 'ere pony is a reg'lar hactor." Irving bored him through with his amazing eyes, and then grunted out in that staccato manner of his : "An actor ? In what way an actor, my man ?"

Hale, nervously retreating a few steps, blurted out : "I don't know in what way, sir, but he's been with Mr. Tree in *The Three Musketeers*, and he always yawned when Tree came on."

Irving turned to Bram Stoker, his manager, who was standing by, and placing his hand on his arm, said : "Umph ! yawned when Tree came on. A bit of a critic, eh ?"

Another story of Irving : The late Norman McKinnel, an old friend of mine, was engaged to play Ugolino in *Dante*, by Sardou, and after the first night I went over to Epitau's and waited for McKinnel to arrive, and when he put in an appearance I eagerly said : "How did it go, Mac ?" Rather despondently he replied :

"I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know ?" I said.

"You remember that scene in Hell where I have my head sticking out of a fiery grave ?" he replied. I had attended a rehearsal and remembered it, so nodded affirmatively.

“Well,” said Mac, “the old man came on and couldn’t remember a word, and kept grunting and grunting. Suddenly he noticed that he wasn’t in the rays of the ‘limes,’ and he grunted: ‘I’m not in the “lime”—I’m not in the “lime.”’ There was a huge rock, made in the manner of stage rocks, in front of him and it prevented him from getting into the ‘lime.’ So, grunting copiously, he began urging the rock down stage towards me, with his knees, till I thought the damned thing was going to bash out my brains. All the time Irving was making signs to the men on the lime perches. At last he got into the rays and muttered: ‘That’s better,’ and looking down at me, peering nervously at him with my head out of the stage trap, he said: ‘They don’t know much about Hell “in front,” fortunately—fortunately.’”

The late Willie Clarkson was one of the best known figures in the theatrical world of London. Innumerable stories are told of him, but much is lost in the telling because his precious voice added so much.

We were discussing one night the death of Queen Victoria and he said to me: “I used to go a great deal to Windsor, you know.” (Private theatricals took place at Windsor in those days and Clarkson provided the wigs.) “The Queen and myself always conversed in French. A very well-read woman, the Queen.”

And then he went on: “Do you know Windsor?”

I assured him that I had never been there.

He resumed his story: “Well I was at Windsor one evening, it was getting late, and I was going down the Grand Corridor. Do you know Windsor?”

I hastily assured him once more of my ignorance of the *locale*, and he went on:

“Well, no matter. I was going down the Grand Corridor—no, you don’t know Windsor—it’s a beautiful place! I was going down the corridor, it was almost dark, and I ran full tilt into someone who said: ‘Where the Hell are you going?’ It was Prince Henry of Battenberg. Awfully nice of him, wasn’t it?”

On another occasion I was returning from a first night

and got into a tube railway carriage which was crowded, and Clarkson came in and stood by me. I guessed that he had been to see the play, and asked him what he thought of the leading lady on whose shoulders the play rested. At the top of his curious falsetto voice he said: "She's no *allure* as the French say." And then, turning the palms of his hands inwards, he made a gesture towards his chest and said lugubriously: "Not enough of this." Everyone in the carriage roared. Men and women. I quietly suggested that a hint to the actress in question might help to remedy the grievance. He would not have that, and amid another gale of laughter added: "A thin face on a full bosom is worse than nothing."

One of the most famous stories about Clarkson, well known to actors, relates to the occasion of the first night of *King John* at His Majesty's Theatre. Tree encountered Clarkson after the performance and asked him what he thought of the show. Clarkson, who was beaming with pleasure, replied: "Magnificent! Magnificent! I couldn't see a single join." (This was a reference to the forehead bands on the wigs worn by the actors.)

Tree was always playing amusing pranks. One day he drifted away from a rehearsal of *Julius Cæsar* and went into the Post Office in Waterloo Place, and peering through the grille said to the girl: "Do you sell penny stamps?" When the girl answered in the affirmative, Tree gravely asked if he could see some. The girl took out a five-shilling sheet of penny stamps from a drawer and pushed it under the grille for Tree to look at. Tree approvingly regarded the sheet of stamps for some time, and, putting his index-finger on the stamp in the middle of the sheet, said with the utmost gravity: "I'll take that one."

I once wounded Tree in a stage fight. It happened in this manner. I was the principal swordsman in the Cardinal's Guards in *The Musketeers*, and Tree as D'Artagnan defeated all my comrades and then turned on me, who was supposed to have a great reputation as a swordsman. This reputation had been subtly planted in the audience by the author.

I was to put up a great fight, but in the end Tree, with a

brilliant *staccato* thrust, pierced me to the very heart and I fell mortally wounded.

Tree, who was a poor fencer at any time, became very nervous when it came to tackling me, and all the ginger went out of his sword-play when I faced him with an implacable gaze, gently waving my three-foot rapier like the tongue of a serpent.

One night in his nervousness he backed into the Prompt corner, and would not come out till I retired. Later, he came out of the corner and I allowed him tamely to dispatch me. Tree's business was to gather all the rapiers of the defeated men, and, holding them like a bunch of daffodils, sweep off his hat and bow to Miladi (Mrs. Brown Potter), who had been watching the fight with an enigmatic smile from a balcony overlooking the courtyard, and then the curtain would descend amid tumults of applause. On the night in question the applause was not as tumultuous as usual, and when Tree had taken his call I was sent for by the stage manager.

On arriving on the stage, Tree immediately said: "Ruined the scene again," and, assuming a defensive position, requested me to make a lunge at him. I complied with his request, and to my horror he did not parry my thrust, but somehow managed to put his thigh right in the way of my rapier, and an inch of steel penetrated same. He dropped his rapier, and turning to Shelton, the stage manager, exclaimed: "Did you see that? Done in cold blood!" Consternation spread over the face of Shelton, who immediately produced a linen handkerchief and bound up the wound. My apologies were disregarded and I was evidently looked upon as a potential assassin.

Somehow the news leaked out to the "front of the house," and Sir Johnstone Forbes-Robertson, who was occupying a box, came on to the stage and offered his sympathy. The Play, however, had to proceed, and Tree and myself went to our respective dressing-rooms.

I had another small scene with Tree in the next act. I was playing De Brissac, the lover of Mabel Love, who was maid to Miladi, and I jealously had to search for D'Artag-



Henderson-Bland as Count Srariatine in "A Cigarette Makers Romance"

nan, who would stand hidden in a suit of old armour watching with "eternal lids apart." I was standing in the "wings" waiting for my cue, when I heard the clanking steps of Tree in his armour and, turning, I went up to him and apologised again. He then very gallantly admitted it was his fault and said charmingly: "It's all right, my boy, but don't do it again."

## CHAPTER 5

### *All in the Game*

I Play a Variety of Parts—With Decima Moore in *All-of-a-Sudden-Peggy*—As the Spider in *The Silver King*—As Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*—And with Mrs. Brown Potter in *Du Barry*.

I WAS once playing with that delightful actress and charming woman Miss Decima Moore (now Lady Moore-Guggisberg), in a play entitled *All-of-a-sudden-Peggy*, by Ernest Denny. It was Christmas Eve and we were playing on the pier at Eastbourne. It was a most amusing play and it did very good business on tour. After the second act the manager of the company came to my dressing-room to tell me that a woman had died in the theatre. A doctor, who had been sent for, said that she was an expectant mother, and laughter had literally killed her.

The manager did not wish the women of the company to know anything about it because he thought it would depress them. Could I keep them in the theatre until the body was taken away? It was a long way down the pier.

After thinking a moment, I suggested that the management should keep the foyer bar open at the end of the performance to enable me to invite the company to partake of some slight refreshment while wishing them a Happy Christmas.

I arranged for a scout to come and tell me when the coast was clear. It all worked beautifully. We all wished one another a "Merry Christmas," in fact I wished them a "Merry Christmas" again and again. Then I began to tell stories, and in the middle of the best one the scout who had offered to report progress came up to me and whispered quite audibly: "The body's still here," and I forgot the end of the story. By this time the women of the company were beginning to look wonderingly at me. I feverishly kept the ball rolling for another five minutes, and then the

manager came in and in quite a jolly manner said in a loud whisper: "The body's gone. Everything is O.K."

After that we all went home.

About this time I signed a contract to play The Spider in *The Silver King*, a part that made E. S. Willard famous. The play made a fortune for Henry Arthur Jones. The Spider was the first swagger crook-part ever seen on the English stage. He was always smart, keen and alert, and the gang that surrounded him feared him. He had a whistle that used to announce his appearance to the gang. The whistle became quite famous and boys in the streets were often heard using it. I was playing at the Princes' Theatre, Bristol, and one morning was just starting a game of golf with Toogood, the local professional, and was about to "drive" when I heard the "Spider" whistle just near me. I looked round and could see no one. Toogood looked as surprised as I did. Again I started to drive, and again the whistle. I stopped again and turning to Toogood said: "Where the devil did that come from?" Toogood could not help me. After waiting a minute, once more I raised my club, and then again the low, mysterious whistle. Toogood made a dash into some bushes and immediately emerged with a small boy. It happened that the boy had been to the theatre the night before and had been thrilled with the part of the "Spider." He had recognised me on the way to the links and had followed at a respectful distance.

I was a little flattered by this instance of hero-worship, and, giving the boy sixpence, asked him to do his whistling after I had finished my drive. He stood by while I fozzled my shot and then went off without even looking at me, whistling another tune. He had evidently lost faith in me.

In the part of the "Spider" I had to dispose of Geoffrey Ware in the first act, and I used to shoot him in most *nonchalant* manner by placing my revolver on the table, turning my wrist and then pulling the trigger. During this scene slow music was played to add to the horror of it.

One night after the scene I got a note from the conductor of the orchestra asking me if I would mind turning my revolver a foot to the right. He pointed out with great

charm that the wad from the last blank cartridge had just hit him in the eye.

One night in this same play I had just got through my nefarious deed and was leaning over the murdered body of Ware, when a loud voice said: "I don't like yer. Yer nasty b——! Get off!" Amid a howl of laughter I made my exit through the window by which I had come.

One morning I was asked over the telephone if I would undertake to play the part of Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* at two days' notice. I found out that the late Mr. J. T. Grein, one of the best critics of the theatre in London, had arranged a tour through Holland and Belgium. Having played Bassanio a good deal several years before, I consented. Clarence Derwent was to play Shylock.

Poor Clarence Derwent was up against something playing Shylock in Amsterdam, where Louis Bouwmeester had made the part his own, and evidently memories of his fine production lingered in the minds of the critics that assembled to appraise us. I was let off lightly. After all, Bassanio is not a great part. As long as the actor is pleasant—and according to notices I fulfilled that function and was dismissed—he is forgiven a lot. But Shylock! The notices started something like this: "We have seen Bouwmeester in this part," they boomed, and then proceeded to fulminate. Poor Derwent began to imagine that he was the victim of a joke.

Later I saw Bouwmeester (I have a serene hope that I have spelt the name properly) in London, but not in the part of Shylock. He was very small, with fine head and torso, and he played his scenes in a chair with a rug round his legs. I could not understand why he was not playing Shylock. Did he think that the English would not accept a tragedian unless there was six feet of him? Surely someone could have reminded him that Edmund Kean, a little man, captured London at Drury Lane, in the part of Shylock.

Anyhow, when watching him I was caught thinking on the dangers of nationalism where Art is concerned. He struck me as a good artist with fine powers.

All my spare time during that tour was spent in the galleries at The Hague, Amsterdam, Antwerp and Brussels.



Stella Patrick Campbell in "The Afrikander" (Photo: Bassano)

What treasures these galleries contain. And is not the arrangement of them a joy? When I hear people prattling of Rembrandt I always enquire if they have seen the Rembrandts at The Hague, and if they tell me they have not done so, I know they have not seen the glory or been tangled in the mystery of Rembrandt's genius.

It was during this tour that I had an interesting experience. I was walking among acres of tulips on a sort of duck-board at Leyden—anyone who has seen the riot of colour the tulips of Holland make in the spring has a memory not easily erased—when I met a young man with a book in his hand, and I enquired in execrable French the way to the University. With a lack of tact, but with a certain charm, he replied to me in excellent English and told me that he was a graduate of the University of Leyden.

I had an idea that Erasmus was a graduate of Leyden and asked him if that were so. "No," he replied, "but we have a portrait of him and I shall be happy to show it to you." This offer delighted me and we strolled towards the University discussing Erasmus. My new friend told me, among other things, that Erasmus was at one time a chorister at Utrecht under the famous organist Jacob Obrecht. This conjured up a new picture of Erasmus to me, who had in mind the man who refused to remain at Oxford when John Colet was lecturing there because the Bible was in Latin, and Oxford could teach him no Greek. A chorister! That was a different story.

My friend had a book in his hand and I asked him what it might be. He passed the book to me without speaking. It was a small volume in English of the poems of Burns, with an introduction by Joseph Skipsey.

He asked me about Skipsey. If he knew all about Erasmus I knew a little about Skipsey. I explained that he was a coal miner who wrote verse, and attracted the attention of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. After a time he became somewhat of a nuisance. Rossetti procured for him the curatorship of Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon. Being a hard-handed son of toil, I suppose it was thought that he was the right man to supply the introduction to the poems of the

Ploughman Poet, but Burns was a great lyrical poet and Skipsey little more than a tiresome bore. He was in the ascendant at the time, Ruskin, taking advantage of the idealism of youth, convinced a group of undergraduates that they ought to do a modicum of manual labour, and had them out daily with pick and shovel at Oxford, making a road.

I am getting off the track somewhat, and had better return to the stage.

It was about this time that I played with Mrs. Brown Potter in *Du Barry*, produced at the Savoy Theatre, London. I played one of the lovers—the Duc D'Aguillon—and understudied the leading man, Holmes Gore, who was killed in the war. This was a most disastrous season for the beautiful Mrs. Brown Potter.

Charles Brookfield was the author of the first version that we rehearsed. Brookfield is the man who is said to have remarked, when asked what he thought of Tree's Hamlet, which followed Goethe's idea of the part: "It was funny without being vulgar." Brookfield was a very tetchy person and got very annoyed one morning when Mrs. Brown Potter asked him if he couldn't write in a forest scene giving her an opportunity to talk of birds and flowers, and argued that it made the character of Du Barry more attractive if it was shown that she admired such things.

In a petulant manner Brookfield threw the script onto the stage muttering: "Birds and flowers be damned!" walked out of the theatre and could not be coaxed back.

Another version was hastily prepared by Miss Christopher St. John, the authoress who so cleverly edited the Shaw and Terry letters.

We rehearsed eleven weeks for this play and it ran a fortnight. An amusing incident happened on the first night. To induce Du Barry to let down her hair to dazzle Louis, who was seeing her for the first time, one of the characters, the procurer Lebel (played by William Devereux) remarked to her that Mademoiselle Guimart, a rival, had said that Du Barry's hair was false. Mrs. Brown Potter, who had lovely red hair, had added a long switch to make

it look more abundant, and on hearing the accusation tossed her beautiful head, and proceeded to let down her hair, at the same time muttering: "Guimart says it's false—says it's false," and in her excitement she detached the added switch and it fell on the stage. It was heralded by roars of laughter from the audience. Mrs. Brown Potter stooped and picked up that switch of hair as if it was a deadly viper and tossed it into the prompt corner.

Miss Edith Craig, the clever daughter of Miss Ellen Terry, helped to produce *Du Barry*. The play was a great failure. I think the critics who knew something of the career of *Du Barry* expected a little more salaciousness, and their hopes, which had risen muchly when the curtain went up on a lovely scene displaying *Du Barry* in bed, were wildly dashed when it was found that I, as her lover, was given nothing more to do than suggest the luxury of the period in a costume made of stuff that cost two guineas a yard.

I never said a witty thing or did an indiscreet one.

Brookfield's version was much more excoriating. This play ruined Mrs. Brown Potter financially, and completely ruined a certain lawyer who juggled with some funds when backing the play. He was reminded that such enterprises do know such a word as "fail," and he was sent to prison.

Miss Edith Craig founded The Pioneers, a play-producing society which gave some most interesting productions. I played in two of them. One a production of *Hamlet*, when Louis Calvert, thinking on the words "fat and scant of breath," determined to show London a fat Prince of Denmark; and the other a production in which Dame Ellen Terry was to give her farewell performance in *Paphnutius*, on Sunday, January 11th, 1914. This, however, was not her last appearance.

Louis Calvert, like his father, who produced so much Shakespeare in Manchester, was steeped in the traditions of the theatre, and gave a most interesting performance. I played *Fortinbras*, and it was the first time this significant character had been seen on the stage in London for years. Most actor-managers finished the play with the lines:

“Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet Prince :  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

Fortinbras is very essential, and Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing when he introduced this character at the end of the play. When he wrote it he was thinking more about elucidating the character of Hamlet than of any actor who might play the part.

Fortinbras is the man of action and is strongly contrasted in a masterly fashion in a few lines with the irresolution displayed by such a character as Hamlet. Goethe, who was profoundly influenced by Shakespeare, harped on the fact that Shakespeare was never tired of presenting characters ruined by irresolution.

I wore a costume that was completely out of the period, but it was one designed by Sir Philip Burne Jones, and it had been worn by the late Sir Johnstone Forbes-Robertson, as Lancelot, in *King Arthur*.

The supers had not been rehearsed for this Sunday performance, and I noticed looks of perturbation on the faces of four of them to whom fell the job of carrying Calvert, when I spoke the line :

“Let four Captains  
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage.”

After a good deal of staff work, accompanied by audible whispers, they managed to raise the ponderous body of Calvert shoulder high, and they proceeded uncertainly to the exit. When they had set Calvert down, one of the supers said to another in delicious cockney as they went to their room :

“It’s a good job the play is only for one night. Though I needed the money I couldn’t go on ’andling a bloody ’eavy ’Amlet like ’im.”

Another story of Hamlet recurs to my mind :

Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer was playing Hamlet in Dumfries, where Burns, the poet, is buried. Dumfries was a three-night town in those days, and we were finishing the week by playing Hamlet on the Saturday night. Henry Crocker, a most conscientious actor and stage manager, had been so



Miss Ellen Terry (Photo: Alfred Ellis & Walery)

annoyed at the dilatory manner in which the stage hands worked, that he told them that the customary tip on the last night would not be forthcoming, so they plotted a deep revenge. They knew that Crocker would play the First Grave-digger because they had seen him rehearse the part. They were ordered to get some earth for the grave, and they did so, but at the same time they collected the filthiest garbage they could find, and put that in the grave also. Poor Crocker went to his doom without any warning. I was playing Laertes, and standing in the "wings" awaiting my cue, attired in an appropriate black doublet, hose, and mantle. Suddenly I noticed Crocker doing certain business I had never seen him do before. He held his nose with his hand and gave vent to strange exclamations of disgust; and then, leaning on his spade, rocked with laughter. I wasn't very much struck with this new business, and thought some of it rather distasteful realism.

He was laughing uproariously when I made my entrance with the funeral procession, and when I said :

" Hold off the earth awhile  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms,"

and leaped into the grave and bent down as if to kiss Ophelia for the last time, he nearly exploded.

I soon learned the reason for this uncalled-for hilarity. My olfactory nerves were assailed with such a disgusting stench that I staggered out of the grave as one gassed—phosgene would have been welcomed with pleasure at that moment—and flung myself blindly upon Hamlet, who thought I had suddenly gone mad. But certain evidences of there being " something rotten in the state of Denmark " convinced Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer that I had some reason for behaving with such violence. I was all impatience to get off to find the scoundrels who had played this trick, and the admonition of Claudius : " Strengthen your patience," was given at a moment when I noticed that my shoes were covered with filth and was singularly appropriate. Those stage hands were missing that night, and

how Crocker got the scenery out I know not. When I asked him how he could laugh so heartily while suffering such a horrible stench, he said that the only thing that supported him was the knowledge that I had to leap into that mess.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Experientia Docet*

An Amusing Experience with a Dramatic Critic—Charles Warner's Intensity—Fernandez as the Unmounted Iron Duke—My Interview with Edgar Wallace—Norman McKinnel's Economy—I refuse Bram Stoker's *Dracula* at £100.

I AM reminded of a story through reading news about Mr. Sirovich and the dramatic critics. I was doing a summer season at the Theatre Royal, Margate (the theatre where Sarah Thorne carried on with her famous Repertory Company), and was sharing "leads" with the late O. P. Heggie, so well known in America.

I was playing Dallas in *The Walls of Jericho*, and Denise Orme (of Gaiety Theatre fame) and the late Keble Howard, dramatic critic of the *Daily Mail*, motored down to see us.

Howard was the critic who dismissed *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, which made a fortune for Fred Terry, with a line to the effect that it was a little flower, "born to blush unseen," and got into a row.

Howard expressed a wish to appear in the play, if only for a moment, for the experience. I said it could be arranged and rehearsed him in one line. He kept on repeating that line all the afternoon with such a deadly reiteration that I was nearly driven mad, and was immensely pleased when I had to go to the theatre at night. While I was putting some sort of make-up on Howard, he was repeating that line all the time, and I thought it was written on his brain in letters of fire. The cue came, and I pushed him on. Someone in the audience laughed—I think it was one of his friends. Howard always said it *was* one of his friends who gave this joyful note of recognition, but this point was never decided.

Howard was very tall and stooped somewhat, and as he lurched towards the centre of the stage he looked a

peculiarly awkward figure. That laugh froze all his young blood, and he stood there like an Arab suppliant for alms. Three times he tried to make his voice function, but failed miserably, and the audience laughed generously. At last the actor to whom the line was supposed to be addressed grasped the hidden meaning of Howard's vocal splutterings and, taking him by the arm, said: "I know exactly what you are trying to say, my good fellow," and led him off the stage. I jokingly told him that I had lost faith in his criticism after seeing him act. He told me that he had never been so frightened in the whole of his life.

Two fine actors whose work I much admired were Charles Warner (the father of H. B. Warner) and James Fernandez. They had a certain fire which they could communicate to an audience if given a part of great emotional range.

I remember playing Rivoire with Warner in *Heard at The Telephone* at a memorial performance as a mark of respect to the wife of the late Charles Morton at the Palace Theatre. It was a wonderful programme, comprising all the "stars." I shall never forget Warner's performance. The intenseness, the sweep of it, was like nothing that I had encountered up to that time or since. I had certain business where I tried to restrain him by placing my hand on his arm while he was listening through the receiver to the murder of his beloved wife. I could actually feel the physical magnetism thrown off by the man. He swept that audience with such a surge of emotion that he was called eight times, and when he had gone to his dressing-room the stage manager came and asked him to take another call because the audience were still clamouring for him. The stage manager later had to remind the audience that there was a big programme to get through. He surprised me very much one day by sending me a most remarkable letter about my book of poems, *Moods and Memories*. I had no idea that he cared anything for poetry at all.

James Fernandez was a fine actor and a lovable man.



Mrs Langtry

He had a habit of eliding the letter H from a number of words when carrying on an ordinary conversation, but no one had ever caught him doing this in the theatre even in the most impassioned parts. He played the advocate in *The Man's Shadow*.

A gala performance took place at Drury Lane Theatre in aid of the Netley Military Hospital, and someone conceived the idea of reproducing the equestrian statue of Wellington opposite Apsley House, and Fernandez was chosen to portray the Iron Duke, his fine aquiline nose for one thing fitting him for the part. At rehearsal the horse was not available as it was being made in the property-room.

The afternoon arrived and the late Queen Alexandra was present, and the theatre festooned with her favourite roses. The horse on a high base was set behind a "front cloth" with a ladder in position to allow of Fernandez to mount. I was representing one of the four soldiers that stand at the base (Inniskilling Dragoon).

The idea was that when the "front cloth" was flown we were to start singing as soon as Jimmy Glover, the leader of the orchestra, raised his baton: "We are the boys of the Old Brigade," with a hope that the audience would join in. Fernandez came on to the stage looking remarkably like Wellington, and gazed at the horse. The stage manager evidently sensed something in his manner, for he feebly said: "It is getting very near, Mr. Fernandez."

"It can get a damned lot nearer before I get up on that horse," was the reply.

The late Arthur Collins, the manager, supported by the carpenter and the property man, told Fernandez in the most honeyed tones that the horse was perfectly safe.

The late Dan Leno, the comedian, had finished convulsing his audience—the man was a genius—but nothing would make Fernandez budge. "I don't like the look of the bloody thing," he muttered, and then stood in front of it. We got into position and the curtain went up and we began singing on our cue, but whether it was that sorry-

looking horse with its neck awry that depressed the audience, or that they thought Fernandez had cheated them, I know not, but no single voice from the audience helped out our abortive attempt at singing, and the scene fell flatter than all things flat.

Israel Zangwill was an interesting figure. I appeared under his management in a play entitled *Elizabeth*, written by Miss Gwen John. Nancy Price played Elizabeth with fine understanding, and the late Sam Livesey gave an excellent performance of Drake. Zangwill was always helpful and generous in his praise of other people's work.

I was surprised, after the reading of my play *Francesca*, to hear him on the telephone congratulating me. He said he had heard very favourable comments on the play. How many authors would do a thing like that? He died a few days later, and I never had an opportunity to thank him for his thoughtfulness. He saw the film *From the Manger to the Cross* and he wrote the management an extraordinary encomium of the production. I could not doubt his sincerity, but I could not understand his attitude.

Reference to the film *From the Manger to the Cross* reminds me of my one and only interview with the late Edgar Wallace. An agent rang me up one day and told me that Wallace wanted to see me about a part in a play. I went along and met Wallace who was then, if my memory serves, living at Clarence Gate Gardens. He was very charming, and told me that he wanted me to play the leading part in a comedy of his which was to be produced at the Avenue Theatre. He told me that the part he wanted me to play was that of a Socialist carpenter. He was linking the part with my work as the Christus in the film.

He read me the first act and I could not see anything in it. My face must have registered my disappointment, because when he asked me what I thought of the act, with an absurd disinterestedness I suggested that it was possible that the theme was better developed in the second act. Wallace read no more that day, and I staggered into the arena with a heavy heart. I think I was right about the

play, though. It was duly produced at the Avenue Theatre and it ran four nights. What an amazing career he had in the theatre after that failure!

The Avenue Theatre had been for me the scene of a similar happening. Actors should, like Talleyrand, accept anything that turns up. I was offered the stage management and the part of the Duke of Buckingham in a play entitled *The Master of Kingsgift*. A fine cast was engaged, including Lillah McCarthy, Dora Barton, Frank Cooper, Conway Tearle, Edward Fitzgerald and others.

The authoress, Mrs. K—, read the play to us, and I thought it so tiresome that I saw little chance of its success. After the reading I had a talk with Mrs. K—, and in the most tactful manner I pointed out to her that the expenses of the production were very heavy, and that unless the play made an instantaneous hit she would lose a lot of money. I also told her that I didn't think the play would be a success. She became very frigid and said that she understood perfectly, but the production would take place. I worked very loyally after that, and everything was done to pull the play together, but all to no purpose. The play was an immense failure, and the authoress and her family lost a lot of money.

It was after this disastrous production that the late Conway Tearle decided to go to America. I remember talking the project over with him. He was the best Orlando in *As You Like It* that I have seen. Just before the war broke out I played Brutus in *Julius Cæsar* at the Court Theatre for a few matinées. That magnificent actor, Godfrey Tearle, played Cassius, and the late James Berry played Antony and astonished us all. Portia was played by the daughter of the late Victor Plarr, the poet, who was a great friend of Ernest Dowson. I saw a letter addressed to my friend Victor Plarr by Ernest Dowson, in which he referred to his love for the beautiful girl we had all met at the "Au Petit Riche," in Soho, London. It was sold at the American Art Galleries for a considerable sum.

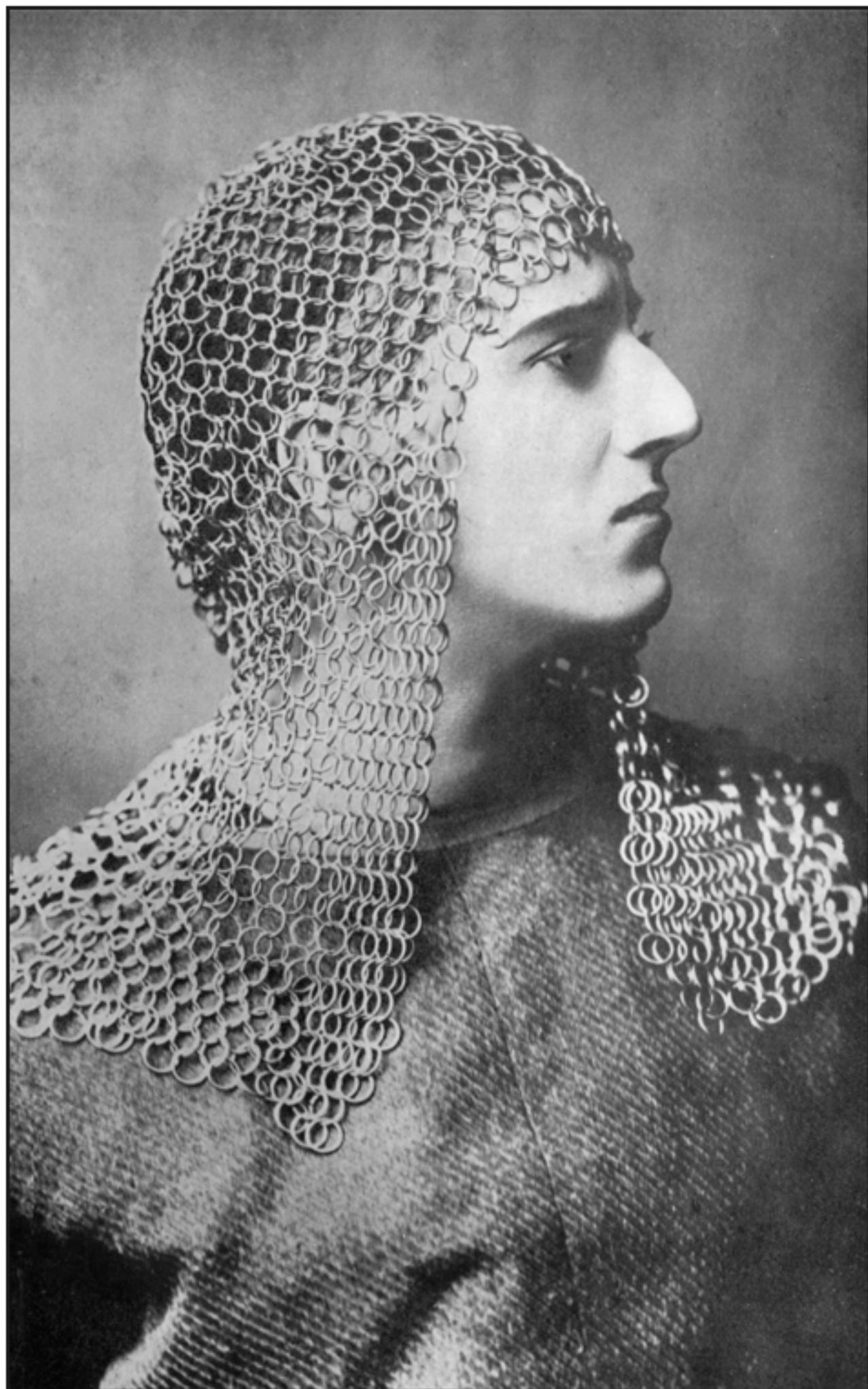
A letter of Keats', sold the same day, reached a price in the neighbourhood of \$7,000.

I lived with the late Norman McKinnel during a tour with Tree's company, and I was tremendously interested to see how he would make good his boast to me that my expenses, including cabs (there were no motors in those days) would not exceed twenty-five shillings a week. This is how he did it. On Sunday we had a sirloin of beef (hot). On Monday we had a sirloin of beef (cold). On Tuesday we had sirloin of beef (hashed). On Wednesday we had sirloin of beef (minced). On Thursday we had sirloin of beef (potato pie). On Friday we had sirloin of beef (toad-in-the-hole—a very rummy dish). On Saturday God alone knew the name of the metamorphosis of that sirloin of beef.

Norman McKinnel kept his promise, but was not particularly hilarious when thinking out schemes to help to make that budget balance. I always thought there was a great Chancellor of the Exchequer lost to the country through Norman McKinnel embracing the stage as a profession. He was a man who could have balanced any budget.

I only mention these facts to give some idea of the remuneration actors learning their profession received in those days. Thirty shillings a week for one year; two pounds a week for a second year. How would that suit some of the young people today? Some paid small premiums, others received no salary. Charles Bryant did not receive a bean during the year he was with Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer.

To give an idea of the help we received when seriously working I will tell this little story: Sir Henry Irving came to Manchester while I was playing with Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer's company in a neighbouring town, and on the Saturday I went into Manchester and presented myself at the box-office of the theatre where Irving was playing. It was literally besieged, but I ventured to present a card and asked for a seat. Mr. Bram Stoker, Irving's manager—he wrote *Dracula*—was in the box-office, and he said: "There isn't a seat in the house," and noticing my disappointment enquired what I was playing. I told him, and



Henderson-Bland as Laertes in "Hamlet" (Photo: G.R. Lavis)

then he said that it was Irving's wish that no one who was seriously working in the Profession should be refused a seat. Mr. Stoker had a seat put in one of the gangways for me.

The late Mrs. Bram Stoker once offered me the play *Dracula*—for £100!

## CHAPTER 7

### *The Tree of Knowledge*

I appear with Sir George Alexander in *The Prisoner of Zenda*—Then return once more to Tree in *The Eternal City*—With Lewis Waller in *Monsieur Beaucaire*—And in *The Three Musketeers* made an undignified entrance as Louis XIII.

ABOUT this time I had an interview with Sir George Alexander. I secured this on the introduction of that delightful and charming actress Miss Eva Moore (Mrs. Henry Esmond). Aubrey Smith was then manager to Alexander, who had successfully damped Smith's ambitions as far as acting was concerned. Aubrey Smith was very charming, gave me a seat to witness the play, and later took me to the dressing-room of Alexander, with whom I talked for some time. However, he had nothing to offer me then. I was surprised to receive a letter a year later asking me to go to the St. James's Theatre, while still a member of His Majesty's company. I was engaged to play Detchard, the swordsman, in a revival of *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

After I had finished my second year with Mrs. Bandmann-Palmer, I went to see Mr. Tree, and he kept his promise, giving me a part in *The Eternal City*, and I remained with him another year.

The part Tree gave me was that of the English Ambassador, Sir Evelyn Wise, and I opened the play with Miss Nancy Price, who was then one of the most beautiful women on the English stage. Miss Constance Collier, at the height of her fame and beauty, was the leading woman, and Robert Taber the juvenile.

Just before going on to give my execrable performance, Tree whispered to me: "Keep your voice up," and with the most laudable intentions I intended to do so, but was gravely conscious of the fact that it was issuing from my

boots; but the audience were too busy looking and whispering while Miss Price ravished them with her beauty, framed by a wonderful chinchilla set.

I was not entirely happy as the English Ambassador made up like Lord Dufferin, but when I emerged in another part later in the play as Captain of the Swiss Guards in a costume, designed by no less a person than Michael Angelo, I was myself again.

Tree devised a little business for me in this part that never failed to please the audience. In the Vatican Gardens, after everyone else had been dismissed, I was left alone for a few minutes with the Pope, beautifully portrayed by Brandon Thomas. Then with a drawn sword I saluted the Pope with great precision and gravity, and sank slowly on one knee while he blessed me—the temporal power saluting the spiritual power.

Charles Buchel, the artist, used this scene for the poster utilised when the play went on tour. I only mention this incident to give an idea of the sure manner in which Tree seized on anything that would touch the imagination of the people.

At this time happened something that I have never liked to believe about Tree. Lewis Waller, whose contract at His Majesty's Theatre was coming to an end, confided to Tree at a luncheon that he was going into management on his own in a version of Dumas's *Three Musketeers*, written by Henry Hamilton, in which he intended to appear as D'Artagnan.

Tree succumbed to a temptation, and commissioned Sydney Grundy to prepare him a version of the *Three Musketeers*. Grundy rapidly wrote a version, and Lewis Waller was cast for the Duke of Buckingham, with the lovely and gracious Lily Hanbury as Anne of Austria, and Mrs. Brown Potter as Miladi.

I shall never forget the first night of that play. Waller's part was quite small, but he played it superbly—got every ounce out of it—and the audience adored him. He was not "on" in the last scenes, and he went to his dressing-room, and later left the theatre before the end of the play.

When the final curtain fell and all the principals took

calls, there was no Waller. The audience howled for him. Tree sent to Waller's dressing-room, but of course he could not be found. Tree went on and took another call, and then another, and another, and above the din was heard the cries: "We want Waller! We want Waller!"

When it was evident that Waller was not to be found, Tree went on the stage and told the audience that Waller had left the theatre. This was a signal for renewed calls for Waller, and in the end the lights of the theatre were lowered and the audience calmed. I was devoted to Lewis Waller and was very grateful to Tree, and this incident grieved me much.

When the run of *The Three Musketeers* ended, Waller left to arrange his own production, and sent me a letter, offering me a part. Unfortunately, I was not able to accept it because I was rehearsing in another play.

However, I did join Waller later to play Mr. Bantison in Booth Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire* on a tour of the Provinces. What a lovely performance Waller gave in that play! So manly, graceful, and so tender. By a curious coincidence Sidney Olcott, who produced me in the film *From the Manger to the Cross*, produced Rudolph Valentino in *Monsieur Beaucaire*, and a very polished production it was. The scenes at the French Court had more atmosphere—a greater sense of the period—than anything I have ever seen on the screen. Waller played the love scenes in this play with a much more beautiful sincerity than Valentino, who had a common trick of lowering his eyelids when looking at Lady Mary, like a professional philanderer.

Valentino had hideous ears, and his director had great difficulty in cheating the camera of its prey.

Waller did an unusual thing on this tour. He played two weeks in each of the big towns instead of the usual one. He originally produced the play in Liverpool and the local critics gave the play dreadful notices. Waller who had literally put all his savings into the production was in despair, and he asked that prince of actors, Sir Charles Wyndham, to come from London to see the play and to advise him. Wyndham appraised the play and told Waller



The late Mr. Lewis Waller

(Photo: Langher)

that he was confident that it would be an immense success in London. He was right. Waller opened at the Comedy Theatre and made one of the hits of the Season.

However, the management at Liverpool were so nervous about the chances of success after what the Liverpool critics had written, that they begged Waller to book the play for one week instead of two. This Waller refused to do. We started the two weeks' engagement and the Liverpool critics gracefully said there were things in the play and the performance of it which had escaped their attention when they first saw it, and we did wonderful business, the second week being better than the first.

We all know that the play is no great shakes, but I shall always remember the scenes between Waller and Grace Lane, who looked such a "dainty rogue in porcelain," as Meredith has it. The late Kenneth Douglas, the husband of Grace Lane, made a hit in New York in a play entitled *A Pair of Silk Stockings*.

When *The Three Musketeers* was very much in the air, Mr. Ben Greet (afterwards Sir Philip Ben Greet) produced a version by H. A. Saintsbury. I played Louis XIII, and later the part of Athos in this version. An amusing thing happened one night. As Louis XIII I used to make, what I imagined, was an effective entrance on the arm of Cardinal Richelieu (played by the late Lewin Mantering, who was recently seen in New York). We carried for the play an imposing staircase, lined with red pile carpet, held in place by brass stair-rods. Musketeers in their tabards used to line the staircase and trumpet my approach on sorry-looking instruments. One musketeer with extreme carelessness dislodged the stair-rod on the top stair, and after the trumpets had drawn attention to the fact that something untoward was going to happen, I appeared, magnificently attired, leaning on the arm of Richelieu, whispering something in the nature of a joke.

I proceeded to descend the stairs and stepped on the dislodged stair-rod, and was speedily precipitated the whole length of the staircase, amid gales of laughter, into the middle of the stage.

My superb hat with its magnificent sweeping feathers shifted its position somewhat, and I sat for a few seconds, a little dazed, while the laughter died down. Then rising with the help of the courtly Richelieu, I dusted my knees with a splendid lace handkerchief with all the aplomb I could command, and asked the Cardinal to tell the Chamberlain to send for a few nails and have a certain rod firmly reinstated. Next morning the local paper came out with this headline :

DIGNIFIED ENTRANCE OF LOUIS XIII LAST  
NIGHT  
FALLS DOWN THE PALACE STEPS

We did remarkable business during the week, largely, I think, because the audiences that assembled expected me to repeat my daring exploit of the first night ; and whenever we were doing bad business the manager hovered round me and dropped hints about the possibility of a repetition of my acrobatic feat. His hints fell on deaf ears.

The late Graham Browne, the husband of Marie Tempest, was the D'Artagnan in the Ben Greet production of *The Three Musketeers*.

A few words about the late Captain Hutton, famous fencer, of the King's Dragoon Guards, may prove of interest.

When he asked me if I would like to become his pupil he warned me that I would have to work hard. I was delighted to accept. I did work hard. I was kept lunging at a small coin on the wall with short breaks for an hour at a time. It was a tiring and an irksome job to start with, but I soon got used to it. The muscles in my thighs and legs responded so well to this treatment that I could almost fight sitting down.

Captain Hutton had curious ideas about fencers. He thought they were born, not-made, and unless a man had sensitive nerves, the right hands, eyes and temperament, he thought no number of lessons could make him a first-

class fencer. He used to say of men who were not sensitive : "Give them a cutlass : they will do better with that." He thought there was good material in good painters because their hands were trained.

He trained me to control my gaze. He would say to me : "Never close the eyes when facing an opponent ; and always look at the pit of the nose between the eyes. Never try to look at two eyes at the same time. Fix your gaze between them at the pit of the nose, and then you will control both of them ; but never close your eyes for a moment."

I trained my eyes so well that even today, with the blushing years thick upon me, I can outgaze most of my young friends. Government of the eyes is one of the most important things in fencing.

Never fence for the sake of sweating ; it is an insult to a great art.

Captain Hutton gave me exercises when blindfolded. This was to train the nerves of the arm. My nerves became so sensitive that I could almost anticipate the blade of my opponent leaving mine.

He would not let me fight with what he thought "ragged" fencers—it was bad for me. On the stage, however, I had to do this. He taught me how to use the rapier and dagger, but, of course, most of my work was with the modern foil. He had a splendid library on Fencing in all ages, and I borrowed freely from it. His own book on *Swordsmanship* was a standard work for years.

Captain Hutton was a very handsome man, well over six ft., and when in his fencing kit a very striking figure. Le Brun painted a picture of him standing with gloves in one hand, a rapier in the other. This picture, entitled *Cold-Steel Hutton*, was exhibited at Burlington House and attracted a lot of attention. He gave me a signed engraving of this picture, which I have today.

When he died, I sent a rapier made of graduated laurel leaves, and the family, knowing that I was his favourite pupil, had it laid on the coffin alone. I was touched by that thoughtfulness.

“The Hutton Cup” is fought for every year at the Bertrand Fencing Academy.

Sir George Alexander offered me the part of Detchard, the swordsman, in a revival of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. However, in the part I was not called upon to do any fencing, but I did wear a sword. Miss Stella Patrick Campbell was the leading woman, and of course Sir George Alexander played his old part. Frank Cooper (father of Violet Kemble Cooper) played Black Michael, and other members of the cast were Ben Webster, Miss Frances Dillon, Vernon Steele, Alfred Brydone and Vivian Reynolds.

In my opinion, the St. James's Theatre under the ægis of Alexander was the best-managed theatre in London. Alexander was an actor of very great charm. His great hit as a juvenile actor was in the character of Faust to the Mephistopheles of Henry Irving. He played this part in America when Irving visited that country. It was immediately after this success that he went into management and became one of the most important and successful actor-managers in London.

Never was a theatre so perfectly managed, or the “back of the house” made so comfortable for artists. I have often smiled when contrasting the accommodation and appurtenances afforded artists in America with what Alexander provided at the St. James's Theatre. In America, the artist is severely reminded of his position in the scheme of things.

Polished actor of great charm as Alexander proved himself to be, the smiling gods withheld the kiss over the heart that might have made him a great artist. I remember very well his performance in the part of Giovanni in Stephen Phillips' *Paola and Francesca*, in which play Henry Ainley, as Paolo, stepped into fame overnight. The part of Giovanni was quite beyond Alexander. Whenever he had anything tragic to perform, he always dragged down the right side of his mouth, and the words would slip out sideways. I thought him hopeless in the part.



Henderson-Bland and Mary Odette in "Mr Gilfil's Love Story" by George Eliot.  
Maynard Cilfil watching over the dying Caterina

After the season at the St. James's Theatre I was engaged for an important stage fight in a dreadful play written by an actor, who played the leading part opposite Miss Eva Moore. It was produced at Drury Lane Theatre, and I, and other members of the company, wondered how that astute manager, the late Arthur Collins, could be so completely taken in by such a bombastic idiot. I remember so well that he got laughs in the wrong places on the first night through his lapses into quaint Americanisms. The fight that I had with this gentleman was the only thing that roused the audience. After about ten minutes' strenuous work, I allowed myself to be triumphantly despatched; but the audience never knew that I had the greatest difficulty in avoiding death by reason of the fact that my opponent knew absolutely nothing about work with the rapier, and the excitement of the first night had reduced him to madness. Had I known as little about the rapier as he did, I would most certainly have been killed.

There was curtain upon curtain after that scene, and I, who had returned to my dressing-room congratulating myself on my escape, got a message from Arthur Collins to come down to take a call by myself; but I made an excuse and did not do so. After all, I am sure that the audience only wished to be assured that I was not really dead.

Fortunately, my ordeal in that part did not last long, because the play closed down after three nights. Arthur Collins found, to his surprise, that the word of this man could not be relied upon. The actor-author had convinced Collins that he was a man of substance even if he did not convince him that he could act. Anyhow, Collins was let in for a good deal of money.

Of all the transactions in a London theatre this one amazed me more than any. How such a man could bamboozle a manager like the late Arthur Collins is a mystery I have never solved.

The first engagement I accepted after the war was the leading part of Edward Smith in a film of *General Post*, by

Harold Terry. The play had had a very long and successful run at the Haymarket Theatre during the war.

The film was made by The Ideal Productions Company. Miss Lilian Braithwaite played her original part, Lady Broughton; Dawson Milward his original part, Sir Denys Broughton, and Miss Joyce Dearsley, the beautiful wife of the producer, Thomas Bentley, played Betty, the part originally played by Miss Madge Titherage.

The film proved very successful, and was later reissued. *The Times* in a long notice said "*General Post* is sure to be popular," and ended up "Mr. Henderson-Bland, an actor destined to make a big reputation in British films, makes a particularly impressive figure as the soldier-tailor."

*The Daily Express* gave it a fine notice and started off: "There has seldom been a more enthusiastic audience at the private view of a new film than there was at the first representation of *General Post* yesterday."

Another paper carried this: "If a private show 'crush' so great as to give Press folk a bad quarter of an hour fighting their way to 'reserved' seats is any criterion of success then *General Post* should prove a most marketable commodity. The most unbiassed journalistic judgment is inclined to be warped after several minutes struggle with a rampageous mob."

I cannot vouch for the truth of these statements because I was not there, but I was rung up by someone who had a ticket, and was representing one of the most important journals in London, to say he couldn't get into the hall.

I quote all this to show that I had a good send off when I returned to the films for which I was most grateful. I immediately started under the same management work on a film entitled *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*, from George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*. I played Maynard Gilfil, and the clever and beautiful little Mary Odette played Catarina, and, I think, stole the picture.

*The Evening News* said of this picture: "The production and acting have done everything to make *Mr. Gilfil's Love*

Story one of the most finished pieces of screen work Ideal have ever given us."

While making this film I signed a contract with International Productions to go to France to play Count Skariatine in *A Cigarette-Maker's Romance*, by Marion Crawford and made famous on the stage by Sir John Martin-Harvey.

Playing opposite me in the part of Vjera was a very beautiful woman, Miss Dorothy Vernon, who gave a lovely performance. Instead of Munich we went to Monte Carlo for headquarters, and most of the scenes were shot at that lovely place La Turbie.

An interesting thing happened while I was being photographed in the Hotel Metropole. The late Admiral "Jack" Fisher came and had a chat with me, and among other things said that he would like so much to be in the picture. I said I thought it might be arranged, and spoke to the producer Tom Watts about the matter. He, a delightful man, immediately agreed to arrange something, and I was photographed with the Admiral at the entrance of the hotel. When the film was trade shown at the London Pavilion the appearance of the famous Admiral was greeted with applause. This jolly little scene, which amused the Press a good deal, was cut out when the film was released.

When I got back from France I sat down and wrote a play. This play had been in my mind for a long time. It was about South Africa, a country that always fascinated me after my visit there with Mrs. Langtry's Company.

I called it *When Friends Fall Out*, and later I named it *The Afrikander*.

It was produced at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, with Viva Birkett, Robert Minster, and myself in the principal parts.

It had a good reception, and the Play Actors of London offered to give it a Sunday show. This was done with the same cast with the exception of myself. I wanted to see the show from the front so got Langhorne Burton to play my part. There was some talk about the play being put on in London for a run, but everything seemed so dilatory to me that when several dates were offered me in the Provinces

I embarked on a tour that lasted twenty-two weeks. This time Miss Stella Patrick Campbell played Vivien Ramsay, and Mr. Charles Garry, who had lately played Svengali in *Trilby* at a Command Performance, played Courtenay, and I played Frank Hardy.

At this time I was busy writing my poetic play *Francesca*, based on the story *Paolo and Francesca of Rimini*.

When I got back from the tour I sat down and finished that play. The late Lewis Hind, the critic and journalist, was greatly interested in the play, and insisted that a reading should take place with the best cast available. With the co-operation of the Poets' Club, a reading in the big Dining Hall of the Criterion took place with the following cast: Miss Sybil Thorndike, Francesca; Mr. Henry Ainley, Paolo; Miss Nancy Price, Lucrezia; Edmund Willard, Giovanni; Joan Maude, Maddalena; and Fisher White, Verruchio. I read the smaller parts. The reading went very well, and the Press were very kind. The next day I sold a year's option on the play for one hundred and fifty pounds.

A curious thing happened through that reading. The late Mr. George Moore, although he was not present, heard so much about it that he invited me to dramatise his famous book *Hélöise and Abélard*.

I was invited to dine. I had never met Mr. Moore, but I had so many friends who knew him, and he himself had written so much about his house in Ebury Street, that I felt as if I knew it as well as I found that I knew Emerson's house at Concord, Mass.

I have never forgotten that dinner; it was delightful in every way. I remember that we had boiled mutton with caper sauce, befriended with some most excellent claret, so good that I felt like doing what Keats once did to enrich the flavour. We were discussing the work of Berthe Morizot—he had two fine examples of her work—when suddenly he said: "Is the mutton cut thick enough?" I assured him that it was; reassured he took up the discussion with renewed animation.

Colonel Longworth was the other guest. Later we went



Henderson-Bland as Bantison in "Monsieur Beaucaire"

up to his study at the top of the house and over coffee and cigars discussed bees. If my memory serves he did not smoke a cigar himself. In the chat about bees he never once mentioned Maeterlinck but confined his remarks to Virgil and Horace. This went on till about 11.30, when I thought that perhaps we were fatiguing him and proposed to leave. He would not hear of that and talked about the proposed play. I was there till one o'clock, and I remember so well remarking to Colonel Longworth when we were in Ebury Street: "Do you know what impressed me most about him?" Longworth replied: "No." And I replied: "His youthful voice." He had the voice of a man of thirty.

A proper agreement was drawn up, and I started on the play. I planned the whole play, and wrote the first scene of Act I, which I submitted to him and he approved.

It was stipulated in the agreement that I was to be sole arbiter about what was to go into the play, and what was to be left out. It is as everyone knows a very long book. Well, notes by special messengers began to arrive telling me that he insisted on this and that, and I soon saw that it would be impossible to produce anything satisfactory if I gave way to his demands. The correspondence between us was entirely amiable, but I asked to be released from the contract. He wrote me a most charming letter saying he couldn't allow that, how was he going to repay me for the work I had done? I wrote back and said that I should be more than repaid if he sent me an autographed copy of one of his books. He sent me a copy of *Ulick and Soracha*, published by the Nonesuch Press, with the following inscription:

To R. Henderson-Bland  
with many kind regards  
George Moore.

After this I went to America and sojourned there for several years. I could write much about that great country, and most delightful people, but there is no space here to do so.

When in America my play *Francesca* had a Reading in New York. The Reading was held in the medieval home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Thomas at No. 135 East Nineteenth Street. The setting was perfect. In an enormous oak-panelled room overlooked by a balcony the play was read by characters in elaborate costumes of the period. The part of Francesca was read by Violet Kemble Cooper, Giovanni by Lyn Harding, Paolo by Basil Rathbone, Lucrezia by Janet Beecher, Maddalena by Helen Chandler, Bernardino by Murry Kinnell, and Scarpetta by William Courtney. Appropriate numbers were played by the London String Quartet that came from Philadelphia for the occasion.

*The New York Evening Journal* ended an article in this manner: "The reading was a notable success."

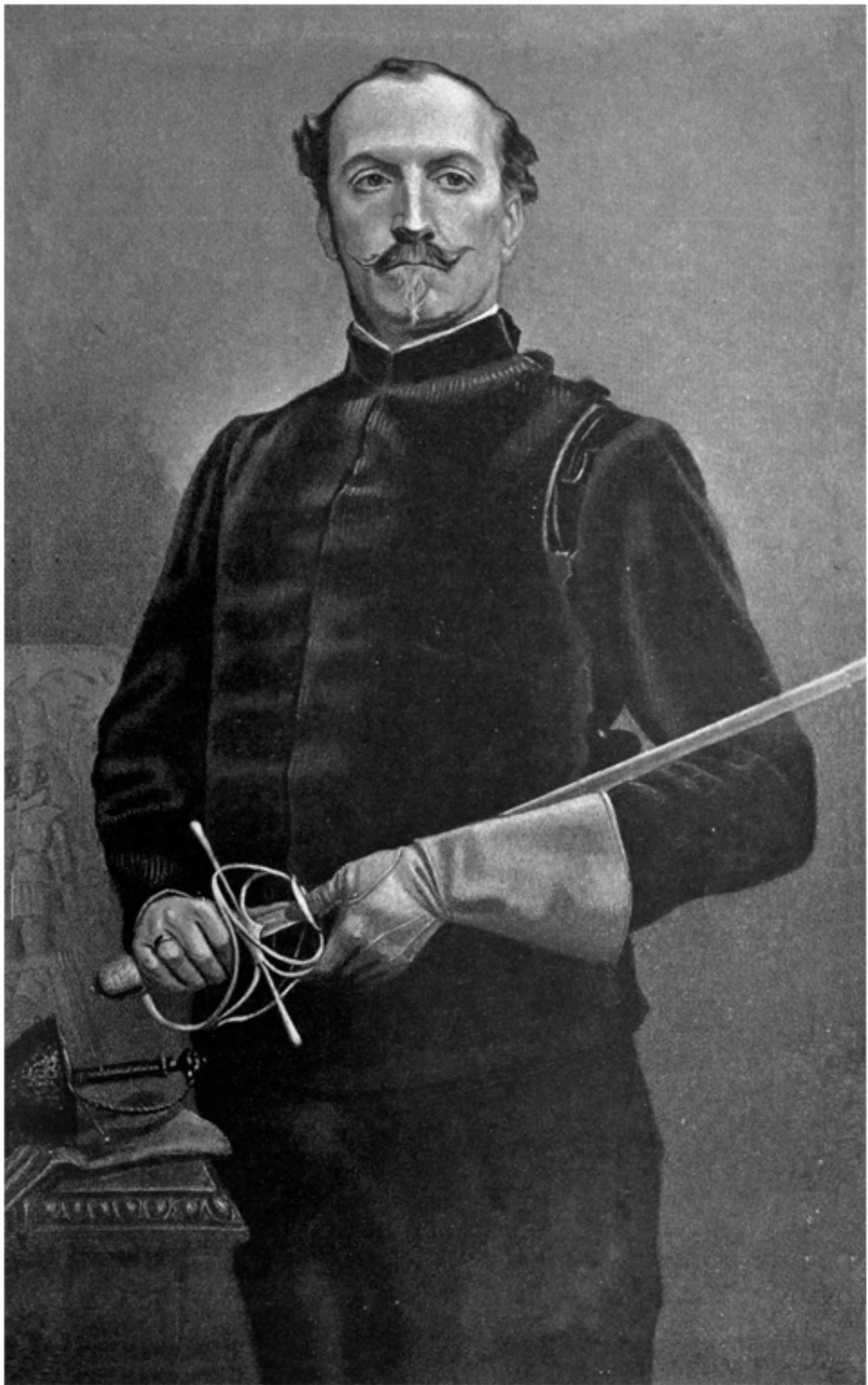
About this time the National Broadcasting Company gave me a contract on most generous terms. Every day, with the exception of Sundays, I read poetry over the radio for three months under the title of one of my books of poems, *Moods and Memories*. I introduced some of the best known poets of America to the microphone.

It was what is called a "National Hook Up," and included Canada. It was a wonderful experience and letters came in daily from all over the country and Canada.

I published a book of poems in America which met with some success.

Since my return to this country I have done little. My last appearance was under the management of Mr. T. C. Fairbairn in *The King of Glory*, by Mrs. Rupert Shiner, at the Royal Albert Hall. I played Herod and the Centurion.

At the Royal Matinée at the London Coliseum on March 27th, 1939, I "walked on" in *Drake* as a Gentleman-at-Arms, carrying a halberd that was not a halberd.



Captain Alfred Hutton